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Understanding the Return of Violent Protest Policing in Europe: Some Reflections Provoked by the Italian Case.

Introduction

The past decade saw the return of confrontational protests in Europe. Militant forms of civil disobedience, occupations of public spaces, destruction of private property, violent clashes with the police have characterised protests of marginalised youths in Paris and London, Spanish Indignados, Greeks anti-austerity movements, German citizen groups fighting against large-scale requalification projects, Italian autonomous workers movements, Danish alterglobalisation action groups at anti-G8 Summits protests. The list could go on.

State reaction towards this upsurge of 'unruly politics' (Tadros 2011) was not mild. In 2012 Amnesty International published two reports highlighting the disproportionate use of violence by police forces during protests (Amnesty International 2012a, b):

> 'Amnesty International has documented incidents involving the use of excessive force, abuse of "less-lethal" weapons, obstructing access to medical assistance and arbitrary detention in several countries including Greece, Romania, and Spain. In many cases, officers have repeatedly hit peaceful demonstrators with batons, including on the head and neck, and caused serious injuries. Despite calls on the authorities across the region, these violations persist' (Amnesty International 2012b: 2).

Although anthropologists have widely studied violence and its consequences in numerous different contexts, the issue of police violence during contemporary political protests has been almost ignored. Not surprisingly, apart from few exceptions (Juris 2005, 2008a, 2008b), there are no anthropological accounts of the recent comeback of violent protest policing in Europe. Situated in this literature gap, this paper aims to outline a set of concepts that might guide an anthropological empirical research on police violence during protests. The paper is grounded on a critical assessment of police violence during protest policing in Italy over the past decade.

In the first section of the paper I will review the politological literature on police violence in Europe, with particular attention on the Italian case. I will focus on this body of literature since political scientists have produced the most complete account of this social phenomenon. I will outline the politological understanding of violent protest policing during protests. Furthermore, I will concentrate on the difficulties that politological accounts of police violence encounter in conceptualising the recent upsurge of brutal protest policing in contemporary Italy.

In the second and third sections, building on the critique of the politological theoretical framework, I will try to identify some concepts that might help anthropologists to overcome the shortcomings of politological studies of police violence. In the second section, drawing on the work of Lewis (2007), I will illustrate how the concept of 'Western democracy', as employed by political scientists, limits their research on police brutalities. In contrast, I will argue for the employment of the notion of 'neoliberal state' – as theorised by Wacquant (2009, 2012)– as an alternative and more effective research tool.

In the third section, I will criticise the tendency of political scientists to look at violence during protests from the perspective of 'repression'. In contrast, I will argue that looking at this phenomenon from the Foucauldian idea of 'punishment as productive' (Foucault 1977) will enhance a richer understanding. I will sustain this argument by discussing a number of empirical studies that illustrate the consequences produced by police violence during protests in contemporary Italy on individuals and social movements.

1. Western Democracies, Protest Policing and the Return of Police Violence

In this section, I will firstly review the politological literature on protest policing and, secondly, I will concentrate on the Italian case in particular. I will focus on this body of literature since political science is the discipline that has paid by far more attention to the issue of protest policing in 'democracies'. In the first part of the review, I will concentrate on the thesis – proposed by prominent political scientists – that Western democracies have developed a particular soft style of protest policing. In the second part I will argue that the

recent comeback of violent protest policing in Italy represents a challenge that political scientists have failed to meet.

The key publication in this field of study is the collective book *Policing Protest: The Control of Mass Demonstration in Western Democracies* (Della Porta & Reiter 1998a), produced in the late 1990s by an international team of political scientists. Based on detailed case studies referring to almost every Western European country, the book has a double aim. On the one hand, it tries to provide a general conceptualisation of changes in post-war European protest policing. On the other hand, it proposes a general 'model for explaining protest policing styles' in democracies (Della Porta & Reiter 1998b: 2).

One of the key categories of the framework outlined in this book is 'protest policing style'. With 'protest policing style' the authors refer to the different ways police deal with protesters. A style of protest policing is the result of the combination of a set of variables like the degree of violence employed, the number of behaviours considered prohibited by the police, the degree of communication with the protesters (Della Porta & Reiter 1998b: 4). In order to understand Western Europe as a context with specific common features, the authors conceive two ideal-types of protest policing style: the 'king's police style' and the 'citizen police styles'. The 'king's police style' is characterized by coercive intervention that tends to increase in relation to specific classes of actors – like factory workers – seen as threatening the status quo. The 'citizen police style' is instead characterised by the tendency to protect the right of every citizen to demonstrate and by the use of coercive intervention only as a last resort.

Within this theoretical framework, the authors analyse the vast empirical evidence available – partially obtained through secondary literature, partially through firsthand research – on protest policing from the post-war period to the 1990s in Western Europe and in North America. The outcome of the analyses is that in Western democracies can be detected a *tendency* towards a distinctive soft style of protest policing keen in safeguarding people's right to protest. The editors summarise their results as follows:

> 'Over time, cross-national differences between the European countries seem to
> have diminished. (…) A *general trend* emerges regarding protest policing styles,

which, on the basis of the variable presented in figure 1, can be defined as "soft", tolerant, selective, legal, preventive, consensual, flexible, and professional' (Della Porta & Reiter 1998: 6, emphasis added).

Ten years later, these conclusions on the protest policing style of Western democracies are still regarded in the politological literature as 'authoritative'. David Weddington, in a comprehensive study published in 2007 on policing public disorder, ends his book by reiterating the conclusion of Della Porta and her colleagues: 'Police forces in Western democracies have abandoned their commitment to relatively coercive and confrontational escalated force conception of public order policing in preference of a softer negotiated management approach' (Weddington 2007: 191).

In relation to the general trend in regard to the policing of protest in Western democracies, Italy does not represent an exception. Donatella Della Porta, in an article published in the already cited collective book on protest policing, summarises the development of the Italian police's attitude towards protest policing as follows:

> 'In Italy (…) following the great wave of protest that came to the peak in the late 1960s, the strategy of control of public order has been profoundly transformed. While the right to public protest has tended to be broadened during this period, strategies of intervention have become distanced from the coercitive model of policing that had predominated until them. During the course of the 1970s and 1980s, despite some setbacks and reversals, it is possible to trace growing tendency to tolerate certain violations of the law' (Della Porta 1998: 228).

However, Della Porta and Reiter (2003) – in a later and more comprehensive work on the development of the police protest policing in Italy from the Post-war period to the early 2000s – notes that the Italian police has struggled to lose its class biased protest policing style. In relation to 'autonomous social movements' (Katsiaficas 2006) – like worker movements outside trade unions and libertarian urban social movements – the protest policing style of the Italian police remained confrontational and violent till the 1980s (2003: 344-345). Nevertheless, Della Porta and Reiter conclude that during the 1990s, even in

relation to autonomous social movements, 'research of de-escalation' is seen as a primary goal by the police (Della Porta & Reiter 2003: 343). Repressive techniques are employed only as a mean of last resort and applied in restricted and controlled way. In order to catch the specificity of this peculiar use of coercive force by the police, Della Porta talks of 'ritualised standoff (…) based on a more aggressive police presence, but often at distance' (Della Porta 1998: 250). She also notes the progressive spreading during the 1990s of protest containment practices aimed at isolating 'troublemakers' from peaceful protesters, and the consequent use of physical repression only in relation to the first category.

In the past decade, this bright narrative of the development of the Italian police in relation to the policing of protest has been strongly challenged by an increasing empirical evidence. Unlike the 1990s, the 21th century's dawn saw the decline of soft-policing and the return to coercive techniques. The most impressive incident is the policing of the alterglobalisation movement during the three days of protest against the 2011 G8 Summit in Genoa. In this circumstance, the Italian police made an extraordinary use of force – including indiscriminate beating of peaceful protesters, journalists, medical assistants and photo reporters, brutal nighttime raids against sleeping activists and torture of detainees in police stations (Juris 2008a; Della Porta & Reiter 2003, 2004; Amnesty International 2001, 2011). Furthermore, during a violent clash between protesters and police, the 21-year-old protester Carlo Giuliani was shot dead by a young officer. Amnesty International (2001) claimed that these episodes represent the main human rights violation in Western Europe since World War Two.

Academics have been cautious in analysing the comeback of violent protest policing in Italy (Della Porta & Reiter 2003, 2004). Till recently, the main narrative proposed by academics was based on the concept of 'exception'. The Genoa incidents – and other incidents too – should be seen, they argue, as the result of contingent factors, errors, partially produced by an 'incomplete reform' of the Italian police. Yet, this narrative seems to be very fragile for at least three reasons.

Firstly, there is a number of extremely detailed reports made by activists groups that illustrate how violent protest policing has been a recurring phenomenon throughout the past decade (Dax & Mutuo Soccorso Bandito 2012; Notav.info 2012; Rete No Global

2001). Secondly, the exception narrative is weakened by the mild consequence faced by the officers leading police operation in the Genoa incidents. Although formally sentenced, the top-officers of the operation are still in office and many of them made career advancements (Agnoletto e Guadagnucci 2012)[1]. Thirdly, the scholarly narrative fails to make sense of the selectivity of brutal interventions by the police.

By analysing scholarly literature on protest policing in Italy during the last decade (Della Porta & Reiter 2003, 2004; Della Porta & Zamponi 2013) and activists produced literature on police violence (Dax & Mutuo Soccorso Bandito 2012; Notav.info 2012; Rete No Global 2001), it emerges that violent protest policing tended to make its comeback during protests and actions of politically and socially marginalised groups marked as 'unruly'. The target of violent protest policing were, for instance, alterglobalisation movements (like the No TAV movement[2]), or autonomous workers movements (like the Sardinian coal miners) or radical urban social movements (like the 'social centres movement'). In relation to ordinary protesters – like trade unions and political parties – police interventions were incomparable more milder.

In a recent article addressing the violent protest policing of an anti-austerity protest in 2011, Della Porta and Zamponi (2013) admit the limits of the 'exception' narrative. In contrast, they point out how the brutalities of the Italian police during protest policing could not be explained anymore in terms of errors. The authors conclude the article by calling for further research addressing the return of violence and police brutality during protest policing. In the next sections, I try to expand on Della Porta's and Zamboni's conclusion that protest policing research needs to put at the centre of its agenda the return of violent and brutal practices in the containment of protests. More precisely, drawing on a

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[1] The Italian police is currently opposing a reform – advanced by several human rights organisations – for the application on their uniform of a personal code that would allow, in case of law infringement, to identify the officer who commit it. Such identification code is already in use in the majority of EU countries (Agnoletto & Guanducci 2012). Furthermore, Italy has not jet ratified the 'Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and establish[ed] an independent National Preventive Mechanism for the prevention of torture and ill-treatment at the domestic level' (Amnesty International 2011). Recently, Amnesty International has strongly criticised Italy for this shortage (Amnesty International 2011).
[2] Based in the alpine Susa Valley in Piedmont (North Italy), The No TAV movement, combat since the mid-1990s the construction of a high speed railway line between Turin and Lyon in France. The line is part of a EU project which aim to connect Lyon to Budapest within the wider scheme of creating a 'tunnel' for facilitating the transportation of goods between an area that goes from Portugal to Ukraine. The construction will cause a social and environmental disaster, destroying the eco-system of the small Susa Valley and displacing part of their inhabitants.

range of different contributions in the social sciences, I shall review some concepts that could be helpful for anthropologists to rethink these 'new' phenomena and to raise new research questions.

2. Neoliberal State, Institutionalised Police Brutality and the Management of The Unruly

In this section I will argue against the employment of the notion of 'Western democracy' – as theorised in the politological literature – in the explanation of the return of violent protest policing in Italy. Drawing on the work of Kristian Williams (2007), I will show how this concept limits the study of police violence, impeding a richer understanding of this phenomenon. Furthermore, I will argue that the concept of 'neoliberal state' as developed by Loic Wacquant (2009, 2012) represents a very useful concept to make sense of the return of violent protest policing in contemporary Italy.

In the work of Della Porta and Reiter police violence during protests is discussed in the framework of a Western democracy that tends to develop a distinctive soft style of protest policing. From this perspective, as illustrated in the previous section, brutal behaviours have been conceptualised through a narrative grounded on the notion of 'exception'. This way of conceptualising police brutalities in Western democracies is not new. Indeed, as Williams (2007) notes, in his compelling and provocative monograph on the American Police entitled *Our Enemies in Blue,* is characteristic of the large majority of police brutality studies. Police brutality studies, Williams claims, are haunted by a pernicious premise, that he calls the 'rotten apple theory' (2007: 21). This theory asserts that 'police abuse is exceptional, that the officers who misuse their power are a tiny minority, and that it is unfair to judge other cops (or the department as a whole) by the misbehaviour of the few' (2007: 21).

Yet, Williams argues, this theory is not very convincing. It fetishizes the brutal behaviour of single agents or divisions of the police as if they were completely disconnected from the broader organizational and cultural structure of the police. In contrast, he points out, brutality is something that is deeply embedded in police:

> '(…) police organizations, as well as individual officers, hold a large share of the responsibility for the prevalence of police brutality. Police agencies are organizationally complex, and brutality may be promoted or accommodated within any (or all) of its various dimensions. Both formal and informal aspects of an organization can help create a climate in which unnecessary violence is tolerated, or even encouraged' (Williams 2007: 21).

Williams (2007: 22) adds to this argument that police brutality is 'not always actually encouraged' and sometimes officials and administrators openly disapprove it. Nevertheless, he stresses that it is undeniable that 'excessive and illegal force is (…) nearly always condoned. Among police administrators there is the persistent and well-documented refusal to discipline violent officers; and among the cops themselves, there is the "code of silence"' (2007: 22). Instead of thinking on police brutality from the premise of 'rotten apple theory', Lewis thus suggests to interpret these phenomena from the premise that 'police brutality does not just happen; it is allowed to happen' (Lewis 2007: 24). In other words, he suggests, we have to start thinking about the police in terms of 'institutionalised police brutality'.

Williams suggests that the fact that accounts of police brutality in terms of 'rotten apple theory' are so largely shared is related to our inability to understand the class bias of our contemporary societies (William 2007: 24-25). Indeed, this critique touches a pivotal point. As we saw in the previous section, Della Porta's and Reiter's concept of 'Western democracy' is deeply class-neutral. These researchers see Western democracies as a political systems that over the years have developed a class-neutral protest policing keen on safeguarding everyone's rights to protest. In order to avoid falling back into 'rotten apple theory' it is thus perhaps helpful to analyse violent protest policing through a more class and power critical concepts than 'Western democracy'. The notion of neoliberal state, as developed by Wacquant, seems to be very productive in this regard (2009, 2012).

Wacquant's conception of the neoliberal state significantly differs from the mainstream. As he notes, major theories of neoliberalism conceive the neoliberal state as a minimal state, retreated from society:

'This reigning view equates neoliberalism with the idea of the 'self-regulating market' and portrays the state as locked in a zero-sum, adversarial relationship with it. Logically and historically, the coming of 'market fundamentalism' implies the retrenchment, withdrawal or recusal of the state, portrayed either as an impediment to efficiency or as a mere instrumentality serving to boost the regained supremacy of capital' (Wacquant 2012: 68-69).

In contrast, Wacquant argues, what is new about neoliberalism is the '*remaking and redeployment* of the state as the core agency that actively fabricates the subjectivities, social relations and collective representations suited to making the fiction of markets real and consequential' (Wacquant 2012: 68, emphasis in original). A key-point in Wacquant theorisation is that the redeployment of the state involves mainly a 'punitive turn' in penal policies. The neoliberalisation of the economy 'diffusing social insecurity and deepening inequalities' has produced an 'unruly proletariat' that poses a serious problem to the reproduction of the system. The unruly proletariat is neutralised by the neoliberal state through an 'expansive, intrusive and proactive penal apparatus'. Wacquant hence concludes that the neoliberal state has to be understood as a highly classist and punitive apparatus:

'the neoliberal Leviathan resembles (…) a Centaur-state that displays opposite visages at the two ends of the class structure: it is uplifting and 'liberating' at the top, where it acts to leverage the resources and expand the life options of the holders of economic and cultural capital; but it is castigatory and restrictive at the bottom, when it comes to managing the populations destabilised by the deepening of inequality and the diffusion of work insecurity and ethnic anxiety. Actually existing neoliberalism extolls 'laissez faire et laissez passer' for the dominant, but it turns out to be paternalist and intrusive for the subaltern, and especially for the urban precariat whose life parameters it restricts through the combined mesh of supervisory workfare and judicial oversight' (Wacquant 2012: 74).

This conception of neoliberal state seems to be very helpful in order to understand the return of violent protest policing in Italy. First, it makes sense of the class punitive

tendency of Italian police during protest policing. As we saw in the previous section, existing literature suggests that violent protest policing in Italy is re-emerging in relation to those politically and socially marginalised groups conceived as 'unruly'. From the perspective of the class-neutral concept of democracy employed by political scientists, these events could not be fully understood and therefore were conceptualised as exceptions. In contrast, from the perspective of the notion of neoliberal state as outlined by Wacquant a brutal and punitive police is not a deviant case. Indeed, it constitutes a productive agency employed by a highly class-biased neoliberal state for the punitive containment of disobedient sectors of society.

In addition, the concept of neoliberal state breaks also with the 'incomplete reform' narrative. As underlined in section one, a central concept in the politological analysis of political scientists is the idea of 'tendency' of Western democracies towards softer protest policing. The conceptualisation of violent protest policing in contemporary Italy in terms of a 'reform yet to be completed' – employed by Della Porta and Reiter (2003, 2004) to sustain the exception narrative – acquires a meaning from this methodological perspective. In contrast, from the neoliberal state perspective the idea of a necessary trend towards a softer protest policing, incorporated in a civil rights oriented reform of the police force, loses its inevitability. Indeed, with the increasing neoliberalisation of Italy we might expect an opposite trend towards a re-institutionalisation of police violence during political protests. A scenario that the recent upsurge of violent protest policing in Italy referred to in the previous section seems to sustain.

3. Police Violence and the Production of Subjectivities

In the previous section, I suggested that by relying on a class neutral concept of democracy the theoretical framework of political scientists encounters serious limitations when it comes to understand police violence. In contrast, I have argued that the concept of 'neoliberal state' as developed by Wacquant provides a more fruitful tool for understanding the contemporary return of police violence during protests in countries like Italy. Similarly, in this section, I will argue for the necessity to go beyond the politological theoretical framework from another point of view. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault (1977), I

will criticise the tendency of politological studies to think about violence in terms of repression. In contrast, following Foucault, I will argue that the notion of 'production' will enhance our understanding of violence. Furthermore, I will discuss some empirical studies that show how looking at violence from the 'production perspective' can significantly enrich accounts of violence during protest policing.

Della Porta and Reiter (1998b: 3) define a police that 'prohibits a wide range of protest activities, and intervenes with a high degree of force' as employing a 'repressive, and "brutal" protest policing style'. As this definition shows, the notion of 'repression' is central in the understanding that political scientists have of violence during protests. As a result, violence is mainly seen as something that impedes or blocks the actions of an actor. Consequently, polititological studies of police violence during protests stop once the use of violence successfully impedes a given behaviour. In other words, when the coercive intervention of the police crushes the protest. This way of thinking about violence in terms of repression is not original and reflects a widespread inclination in the social science. Already in the 1970s Michel Foucault – in his classic work *Discipline and Punish* – criticised this approach. In contrast, he proposed to study punitive practices in relation to the notion of 'production.'

Thinking about the role of institutions like the prison or public executions, Foucault asserts that in order to understand 'punitive mechanisms' one should not look at 'their repressive effects alone – only on their punishment aspects alone – but situate them in a whole series of their positive effects' (Foucault 1977: 23). Punitive mechanisms, he argued, do not have to be conceived as only setting limits to pre-constituted subjectivities and conducts. In contrast, they have to be seen as *shaping* these subjectivities and conducts. Therefore, it is by looking at the consequences that violent and punitive practices have on victims and survivors that we can fully understand those practices.

This conception of violence – as something that *produces behaviours*, rather than something that represses behaviours – has been extremely successful and has engendered prolific research agendas across the whole spectrum of social sciences. I argue that applying Foucauldian analysis of violence to the study of violence during political protests has great potential as well. It will produce a deeper and more nuanced understanding of brutal

protest policing, than the one shaped by the repressive conception of violence of the politological literature. Consequently, an anthropological study of police violence during protests should continue after the protests were crushed, focusing on the effects on the subjectivity of protesters.

The recent works of social psychologists Adriano Zamparini and Marialuisa Menegatto (2011, 2012) show the productive side of violence in context of police brutalities during protests. In these two studies, they address the psychological consequences that police beatings have had on protesters during uncharged imprisonments at the Genoa G8 protests, illustrating how police violence can significantly shape the subjectivity of its victims. Zamperini and Menegatto propose the notion of 'psychopolitical trauma' to make sense of the peculiar, *double* traumatic effects of violence in this case. On one hand, the experience of police beatings has had strong consequences on the psychological level of the individuals everyone rights to protest.

> 'The practices put in place in Bolzaneto[3] had the aim of provoking deep psychological wounds, almost a de-structuration of the personality. And the first manifestation of the psychological violation is a profound sense of disorientation and loss of subjective control (…) "I always thought that some policeman would arrive and bring me back to Bolzaneto, and for two years I had frequent nightmares where I dreamed about a prison from which I had to escape". The experienced shock bound himself on small things, details that appear insignificant but remain impressed in the mind (like the tiles of Bolzaneto). Over a long period of time, for a protester was difficult to bare his self and have sexual intercourse getting a panic attack when "I saw tiles". Depressive forms that remove vitality. For many a psychotherapy was necessary' (Zamperini et al 2011: 95, my translation).

On the other hand, police violence also profoundly affected the way that protesters relate to political-administrative bodies after the violence. Hence, the concept of psychopolitical trauma:

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[3] Bolzaneto is the name of the temporary detention facility where the most brutal beatings against protesters during the Genoa G8 operations were carried out.

'The psychopolitical trauma cracks tremendously the trust in the system, creating a long-lasting psychological rupture. Every kind of contact with people wearing a uniform creates fear and activates tactics of avoidance. "For years as soon as I saw a policeman I became anxious, the heart started pumping and the blood pressure raising, and I tried to avoid these encounters. And again: "For a long time when I saw the police I became afraid and I felt like in Bolzaneto. (…) Even who does not conduct police functions but exercises administrative control functions wearing an uniform can originates (apparently) irrational crises: I could not travel by train because I feared the uniform of the ticket inspector' (Zamperini et al 2011: 98, my translation)

The study provides many insights about the consequences that police violence during protest-related detentions may have had on the subjectivities of the protesters who experienced it. However, the work of Zamparini and Menegatto does not address the broader consequences that such trauma may have on *political* participation. Nevertheless, this study suggests how police violence during protest – by producing traumatized identities – may work as political tactic to control unruly protesters[4].

A more explicit political reading of the consequences of police violence on protesters is presented in the ethnographies of anthropologist Jeffrey Juris (2005, 2008a, 2008b). From his work, it emerges how police violence during protests can have a much more far-reaching political effects than traumatising the people that experienced police brutality directly. Indeed, police violence can seriously affect the way a whole movement engages in protests. In his ethnographic account of the alterglobalisation movement, Juris stresses how the alterglobalisation movement had introduced since the anti G8 protests in Seattle in

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[4] A thought-provoking document to start thinking about the disciplining effects of police violence during protests is the documentary *Black Block* (2011). The documentary collects stories of protesters that underwent beatings during the detention in Genoa. In particular, attention-grabbing is the testimony of 'Muli', a radical German activist, whose story is at the centre of the documentary. At one point Muli says: 'After Genoa (…) I have not done much politically. I felt like they had taken away my ability to take actions. As soon as I saw a group of police officers, I would start sweating. Even participating in a normal demonstration had become hard'. Through a self-help group, Muli could eventually start taking part in political actions again. However, he points out, 'I am no longer at the frontline'. Muli's story illustrates how the experience of police violence can significantly discipline the conduct of a militant protester, rising serious concerns about a conscious choice of the state to use police violence as a political tactic.

1999 new ways of protesting. Until that, large counter-summit protests in North America and Europe were characterised by relative calm rallies with few clashes with the police. In contrast, starting from Seattle, counter-summit protests become distinguished by 'militant tactics'. The repertoire has included 'civil disobedience', 'blockades', 'violent confrontation with the police', 'non-violent physical contact', 'destruction of private property targeting banks and transnational corporation' and the 'conscious violation of no-protests zone' (Juris 2008a, 2008b).

However this growing militancy during anti-summit protests was suddenly interrupted by the 'brutal campaign of indiscriminate police terror in Genoa' (Juris 2008a: 180) and the consequent 'traumatic experiences' (2008a: 192) that it represented for activists. As a result, as Juris notes, activists during alterglobalisation are remarkable much more docile in recent years:

> '(…) anticorporate globalization protests have not reached the same level of confrontation since [Genoa], and activists have generally shied away from mass blockades (Juris 2008a: 192). (…) 'The application of psychological techniques together with overwhelming physical blows inscribed lasting social memories on activists bodies. Indeed the result spaces of terror threatened to undermine the embodied basis of activists political agency. Genoa did have a stifling impact on the willingness of many, though not all, activists to continue engaging in confrontational action' (2008a: 193).

Nevertheless, assuming state violence during protests as only producing submissive subjectivities would be inaccurate. As Foucault has famously noted 'where there is power, there is resistance' (Foucault 1976: 95). What Foucault wanted to stress, with this rather paradoxical sentence, is that the exercise of power not only generates subjectivities that facilitate the working of power. In addition to docile subjectivities, the exercise of power also produces subjectivities that through 'counter-conducts' tend to resist power (see Lazzarato 2009: 114). This insight seems to be relevant for tracing a complete picture of the consequences of police violence during protests. In one if his ethnographies on the Genoa G8 protests, Juris notes that from his interview with protesters at Genoa 2001

Summit emerged how the brutalities of the police had radicalised certain activists (Juris 2008a: 192). This evidence seems to confirm Foucault's thesis.

Conclusion

In this paper I critically analysed the recent return of violent protest policing in Europe, focusing on the Italian case. I started from a review of the politological literature on that issue, emphasising the limits of the politological conceptualisation of this phenomena. I than tried to identify the conceptual causes behind the limitative theorisation of political scientists. Hence, I suggested alternative concepts that might help anthropologists to overcome the reductionist narrative of political scientists. My main arguments are two.

On one hand, I argued that anthropologist should avoid to look at police violence from the notion of Western democracy as theorised in the politological literature. As shown in the first two sections, this notion entails the idea of democracies as a neutral political system that guarantees to every group the right to express dissent. Consequently, it tends to suggest a reading of police brutalities during protests as 'exceptions'. In addition, it obfuscates the fact that police brutalities in Italy made his comeback only in relation to those socially and politically marginalised groups marked as unruly.

Hence, I argued that the concept of neoliberal state, as theorised by Waquant, represent a better tool for understanding contemporary police brutalities. In Wacquant's theorisation, the neoliberal state is exactly characterised by being punitive and violent towards political and social marginal categories. In particular towards those seen as 'unruly'. The concept therefore stimulates a much more rich and complete view on police brutalities in countries undergoing neoliberal transformations than Western democracy.

On the other hand, I argued that anthropologists should avoid a conceptualisation of police brutalities during protests from the perspective of violence as a repressive force. Such conception – dominant within politological studies – conceives violence as limiting behaviour. Therefore political scientists, working from this perspective, stop the study of police brutalities once the violent intervention of the police crushes the protest.

In contrast, I argued, much more productive for anthropologists would be to study police brutalities from the Foucauldian conception of violence as producing subjectivities and conducts. As shown in the last section, the few studies that have tried to trace the consequences of police brutalities during protests have lighted up highly interesting phenomena. Police brutalities during protests have much more far reaching effects than stopping a group of militant protester to vandalise the facade of a McDonald. Police violence can forge docile as well as more militant bodies, and even affecting the protests tactics of a global social movement. Exploring the complex and contradicting dynamics engendered by police violence during protests on political participation could represent an stimulating subject for political anthropologists.

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